

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, March 15, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. Menton, Hotel National, March 15th., 1880?

My dear Mrs. Bell:

I am very sorry that I have not written for so long, or rather that you have not heard for I have written but did not send my letter but Alec said he was going to keep you fully informed and our plans were so uncertain I did not know what to say.

Well we know at least that we are here and that Elsie seems nearly as well as ever, very bright and rosy and fat and perfectly happy to be again with Daisy and out of doors. It will take months to repair the damage done to her left ear and the little leg still drags a little but so far she has gained beyond our most sanguine expectations. She seemed another child the very moment she arrived here. She has grown and matured very much since her illness and Mamma only begs that we shall bring her home before she is a full grown young lady — Daisy is very well and is a bright sharp little girl and would be pretty with her bright color if only the mosquitos were not such baby eaters. Grace has not regained as much strength as we hoped so Mamma had to leave without her, still she is doing as well as we ought to have expected and walks around the town quite a little now.

Where do you suppose your son is now? Climbing on donkey back up one of the Alps! He, can you believe it! got up at six this morning and he and Mr. Johnson started off at seven. His destination was St. Agnes a little village high up on the mountain side, and I am afraid he will stop there, but they talked of going to the very top of the mountain. Alec is ever so much better since coming here also and the weight of anxiety about Elsie lifted off his shoulders, he has done quite a good deal of walking for him and has had no trouble with

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his heart and sleeps very well and in spite of the June sun and the glare of sand and water has had no headaches. This is indeed an earthly paradise, my imagination can picture no 2 more beautiful spot than this. There is the blue Mediteranean at our feet around olive and lemon groves the mountains climbing gradually upwards clothed at first in rish and picturesque garbs of green and yellow verdure and then rising abruptly upwards bare and precipitious rocks. Inland are such lovely narrow valleys with tiny streams trickling through apparently of no use except to furnish the proper effect for the Artistic "bit". Oh they are exquisite and you of all people would enjoy it. We expect to remain a week or so more and then go gradually to Paris perhaps through France perhaps returning first to Italy to have a glimpse of the famous Italian lakes. Our passage home is engaged for the 29th., April but of course our plans depend upon Elsie's condition. It's rather a long way off but I cannot resist inviting you now to spend, if not the whole at least a good part of, the summer with us in our house at Newport. It is quite a large one and there will be plenty of room for me to invite other people there without wanting the room I intend to appropriate to you and Mr. Bell. The house was my Grandfather's and some of my pleasantest, childish recollections are associated with it so I hope Alec and you will like it so well as to be willing he should buy it for a permanent summer residence. You and Mr. Bell must not be alarmed at our expenditures just now. We have got a certain amount which we have put by to spend now, and we shall not go beyond it put if you don't want me to come back here again for many years you should be willing that I should buy as much as I can now for we cannot get these things in America and I shall want them to furnish my house so that if I don't get them now I should have to come again. As it is I think we shall be satisfied for some time. I should like you to open the things as they come, just far enough to be satisfied that they 3 are my things for it sometimes happens that the wrong boxes are sent to people it would be well not to unspok them because they might break when moved again.

Alec has just returned tired out after his days tramp but in spite of a headache caught by lying asleep on the ground until the sun crept under the trees and beat on his head, with undiminished ardour for mountain climbing.

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The Queen of England is expected here in a few days and the town is being decorated with British flags in her honor and addresses to her by the English and Americans are being signed. Alec signs as a British subject. The Chalet des Rosiers where she is going to stay is a very pretty Swiss house large enough for a private gentleman's residence but rather a small one for the Queen and her ladies in waiting will have to put up with whatever lodging they can find. The King and Queen of Saxony are living in a hotel close by here and they often come here to walk in our garden which is the larger and prettier. They are said to be very pleasant and affable conversing with anyone but somehow we have not yet seen them. Elsie asked where the King of England was and on being told that there wasn't any asked if he had been shot by bad man as poor child she has been brought up to think is the end of nearly every big personage.

Is there anything we can get for you in London or Paris? This is your last chance and I shall have so many things to pass the custom house that a few more or less will make no difference. I hope you will like the Roman blanket I send by Mamma it is made of raw silk particular to that part of Italy and cannot be found anywhere else. The ribbons I sent to Mary Louise and Lizzie are also particularly Roman and I think very pretty.

With much love to you and Mr. Bell and my cousins,

Always affectionately yours, Mabel.